

## GUNDOG INTERNATIONAL

Winner of the Believer Perpetual Trophy for best individual performance, Mike Mulch, with his yellow labrador dog, Mulholland Skipper of Upperclaws.



# Germany take the honours

European retrievers set the standard at the Skinner's World Cup retriever event at Highclere Castle in May, as MAURICE STANBURY reports.

The Skinner's World Cup retriever event had a truly international flavour, with 12 teams from across Europe, Scandinavia and the British Isles participating in the two-day competition. The event was held over the late May Bank Holiday at Highclere Castle, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Carnarvon, in conjunction with the Highclere Country Fair. Now in its seventh year, the event has at last come of age, with the European teams taking the top two places, finally overcoming the dominance of the 'home teams', with England having won on three previous occasions, Wales twice and Ireland once.

The German team of Anja Moller (captain), Eveline Schloesser, Wolfgang Koehler and Joerg Brach with three golden retrievers and one labrador took the top honours and the Skinner's Perpetual Challenge Trophy. They were closely followed by the Italian team, captained by

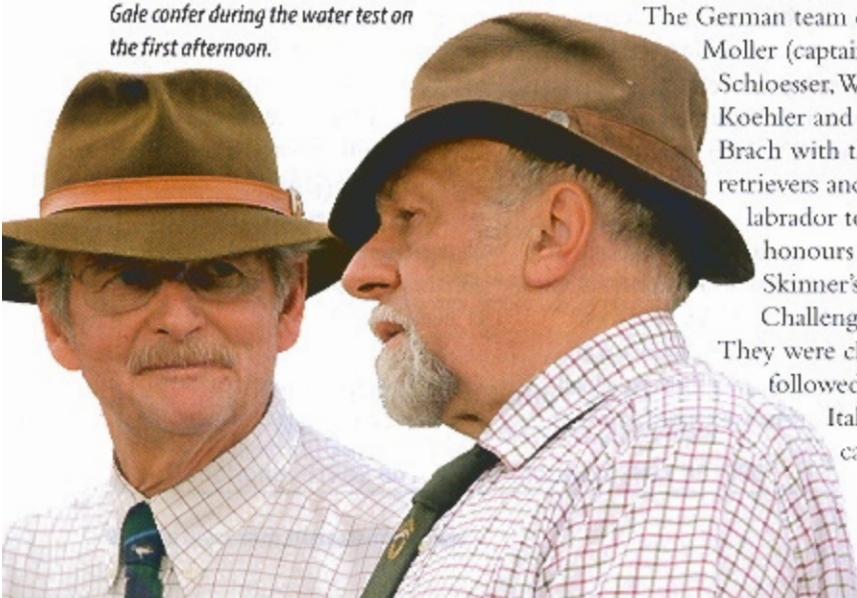
Stefano Martinoli, in second place, with the Welsh team taking third place.

The top individual award overall and the Believer Perpetual Challenge Trophy was won by Dutchman Mike Mulch with his yellow labrador dog Mulholland Skipper of Upperclaws, after a run-off against the highest scoring member of the German team,

“One of the tests that caused numerous problems was a mark in rushes, approximately 100 yards from where the dogs were sat.”

Wolfgang Koehler and his golden retriever dog DRC Ch Stonehunter Canon. This was a tremendous and consistent performance by Mulholland Skipper and handler Mike Mulch. They had shared top points in the competition last year but were beaten in the run-off by Leslie McLean of Scotland with FTCh Lettermore Loyal of Aithness. Mike Mulch was especially pleased because his dog has recently suffered an allergic skin reaction from an unknown cause - nevertheless it did

Judges Robert Kaserer (left) and Jim Gale confer during the water test on the first afternoon.





absolutely stinking weather. Nevertheless, the organisation coped with the conditions well, but the planned programme of 10 tests had to be reduced in number and re-scheduled to deal with the very difficult conditions. Even more disappointingly the water test had to be abandoned on the second day.

The first morning saw three tests being run in parallel, two in woodland and one in open ground. Light rain accompanied by only a slight breeze suggested that scenting conditions would be good. Surprisingly that was not to be; there seemed to be inconsistencies with scent, and some dogs struggled on marked retrieves that appeared straightforward - and yet the very same dogs made the next retrieve look easy. One of the tests that caused numerous problems was a mark in rushes, approximately 100 yards from where the dogs were sat.

*Above: The Swedish team during the walk-up, with Karin Thunander handling her bitch out on a marked retrieve. Judges Phil Parkins and Gilles Testard (far right) keep a careful eye on the performance.*

*Left: Huw Jones takes a retrieve from his labrador dog, Caulliechat Rebel of Garngoch, which won him applause from spectators and his Welsh team mates.*

nothing to impair his performance over the two days.

For the second year running the event was dominated by the unseasonably wet weather, especially on the Bank Holiday Monday. It was a great disappointment that many of the competitors had travelled so far and then had to endure what can only be described as



*Spectators enjoy a brief spell of sunshine.*

Right: Heavy rain on the second morning did nothing to deter the Italian team – they defied the conditions and took second place.



Below: The winning German team, with team captain Anja Moller holding the Skinner's Perpetual Challenge Trophy.



◀ Maybe the height of the rushes impaired the dog's vision, as most took an accurate line but often appeared to over-run the mark.

That same afternoon the sun finally shone for a brief period, and hearts lifted. Onlookers could enjoy the spectacle, while the international competitors were finally persuaded that it could be warm in England. With one pair of judges operating at the lake and the other two adjudicating in the walked-up test, there were excellent viewing opportunities for those who came to watch

and learn rather than participate.

The evening brought the gala dinner, when competitors and officials could relax and enjoy each other's company and swap tales about the success, or otherwise, of their working retrievers. The Scots took top marks for their immaculate appearance in kilts and sporrans, but were closely followed by the Austrians in their own national costumes.

“Wet, but not daunted, they did it, they said, because “we just love to see the dogs at work.”

The second morning brought great disappointment, with driving rain at the outset and a forecast that promised even more of the same meaning that the organisers had to significantly amend and cut short the planned schedule. Ample supplies of hot coffee, with the opportunity of an 'extra warmer' if required, kept everyone going, including the wonderful team of stewards and dummy throwers. One must be full of admiration for the Kintbury Gundog Club, under the leadership of John Chamberlain, which provided a team of 25 willing helpers on both days. Wet, but not daunted, they did it, they said, because “we just love to see the dogs at work”.

The water test and the walked-up test had been completed by six of the teams on the first afternoon in ideal conditions, but it was a very different story on the second morning



Frank de Vries, commented that he had been very pleased with how the dogs had coped with the situation, and that they had been able to mark much better than the handlers in the horizontal rain. He had been amazed that six of the eight retrievers had been marked 'spot on' by the dogs, and only two had to be handled on to their retrievers.

*Above: The Kintbury Club put on a great show with a very willing band of helpers, organised by John Chamberlain (second from left) & chairman Ken Rolfe (centre).*

*Left: A delighted Italian team who were runners-up, their highest place ever in the competition.*

when the strong winds made the water on the lake extremely choppy, with dummies being blown in all directions once they hit the water. Judges Jim Gale (England) and Robert Kaserer (Austria) reluctantly decided that conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that the dogs and handlers were being asked questions that they could not reasonably be expected to answer. Since a number of teams had already completed the water test on the first day when conditions were so different, it did not allow the remaining teams to compete on a level playing field. And so, the whole test had to be declared null and void and could not be counted in the final score.

The walked-up test also started on the Sunday afternoon, but had not been completed because of failing light. On resumption the following morning, driving rain made conditions very different to the previous day, but judges Phil Parkins (England) and Giles Testard (France) were satisfied that visibility was sufficiently good to complete the test. The Dutch team captain,

The Hungarian team, participating in the competition for the first time, put in a very creditable performance, coming fifth equal in the overall rankings. They clearly enjoyed themselves greatly and commented that retrievers were increasing in popularity in their home country. Captain, Oliver Kiraly, who ran an American-bred golden retriever FTW Firemark Lofty Monty, explained that his team members were all from the same club, the Hungarian Working Retriever Association. They had all competed in working tests and field trials as individuals, but it was the first time that they had competed together as a team. They had found the competition to be intense, but the company and hospitality to be excellent. They were full of praise for their fellow competitors, who had been so helpful to them on their debut.

A running score was maintained by the organisers and made available to the spectators and the public during the competition, but with last-minute changes in the schedule it was impossible to predict the final outcome. When the results were made known, there was great jubilation from the European teams, who had demonstrated their prowess at the highest level. ○

## Results

1st Germany	909
2nd Italy	887
3rd Wales	877
4th Holland	875
5th Hungary	872
5th France	872
7th England	870
8th Sweden	868
9th Scotland	865
10th Switzerland	845
11th Austria	821
12th Denmark	770

● Detailed scores with individual marks are available in the news section at [www.skinnerpetfoods.co.uk](http://www.skinnerpetfoods.co.uk)